

Grand Coulee-Bell 500-kV Transmission Line Project

(Eastern Washington Reinforcement)

Fact Sheet – January 2002

Background

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) plans to replace approximately 84 miles of existing 115-kilovolt (kV) wood pole transmission line with a new, higher capacity 500-kV steel lattice line. The proposed 500-kV transmission line would connect from BPA's existing Bell Substation in Spokane to the Bureau of Reclamation's existing Grand Coulee Switchyard at Grand Coulee Dam. The new line would be located primarily on BPA's existing right-of way. The project also would involve expanding Bell Substation and developing Grand Coulee Switchyard within the fenced area.

The project is needed to increase reliability and to support current and future demand for electricity in Washington State and the Pacific Northwest. The transmission line corridor between the Grand Coulee and Bell substations currently contains two 115-kV transmission lines on two wood pole structures and three 230-kV transmission lines on two steel lattice structures. Together, these transmission lines can no longer efficiently move power from generation sources east of Spokane to areas west of Spokane. Replacing one of the 115-kV lines with a 500-kV line will relieve congestion, provide for future growth, and enhance service reliability to the community.

As part of the project, BPA will consult with affected Tribes, conduct environmental studies, and collect public comments. Community input is an integral part of the process, and BPA will seek comments throughout the project.

What Are the Potential Issues?

BPA is identifying potential issues early in the process. Some issues that will be considered include:

- **Potential impacts to cultural resources.** There are cemeteries near the Bell Substation, and other cultural resources are known to exist along the transmission line.
- **Potential impacts to visual resources.** The 500-kV structures would be taller than the existing 115-kV and 230-kV structures.
- **Potential impacts to recreational activities.** The transmission line would be located through Riverside State Park, including the Centennial Trail.

BPA will work with Tribes and interested parties to analyze these and other issues and to reduce significant impacts.

What Are the Anticipated Benefits?

The project is expected to:

- Increase the reliability of the electrical system
- Minimize costs to customers by giving more choices and increasing access to supply



- Maintain BPA's existing power and transmission obligations
- Provide future power and transmission service
- Add flexibility to spill water on the Columbia River dams, thus enhancing fish migration
- Prolong the life of existing equipment by eliminating existing facilities' overloads

What has Occurred Before Now?

BPA previously considered this project, and in 1993-95 an environmental impact statement (EIS) was prepared but not completed. The current EIS will build on the previous study. BPA will need to conduct new studies and contact more people before a decision is made.

In the 1990s, BPA considered these other alternatives:

- Build a new Bell-Ashe 500-kV line. This transmission line would cover approximately 145 miles in a new right-of-way.
- Build a new Taft-Lower Granite 500-kV line. This transmission line would cover approximately 150 miles in a new right-of-way.

These alternatives were presented to the public. The public stated a preference for rebuilding existing lines instead of building new ones. Based on this input and technical analysis, BPA proposes that the Grand Coulee - Bell 500-kV transmission line replace an existing 115-kV transmission line.

What is BPA's Planning Process?

The planning process will occur over the next several months and will consist of environmental studies and community involvement. Some of the key milestones are noted below:

- **Scoping.** BPA will identify possible issues and concerns, including holding Tribal consultations and public meetings to gather input on the project. (January-February 2002)
- **Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).** Environmental studies will analyze cultural, biological, land use, and visual resources. Potential environmental impacts will be documented in the DEIS. The DEIS will be made available for public review and comment. BPA will hold Tribal and public meetings on the DEIS. (Spring 2002)
- **Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).** The FEIS will incorporate Tribal and public comments on the DEIS and modify the document as necessary. (Fall 2002)
- **Decision.** Based on the environmental studies, additional technical analysis and public input, BPA's Administrator will decide how to proceed on the project. If BPA decides to replace the power line, the new 500-kV transmission line can be expected to be operating in Fall 2004.

Want More Information?

Please contact Mark Korsness, BPA project manager, at 360-619-6326 for questions regarding the project. If you have questions on the environmental studies, please contact Inez Graetzer, at 503-230-3786.

For more information, visit BPA's web page at www.bpa.gov, call toll-free at 1-800-622-4519, or e-mail to comment@bpa.gov. Thank you for participating.

